

EQUALITY OR FRATERNITIES?

The Role of Secret Societies in Democratic Education

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IN THE late 1920's the *Yale News* published an anonymous letter from a Jewish student criticizing the social discrimination practiced by the junior and senior societies. For this offense, the student was promptly taken to task by the editor of the *American Hebrew*. "What is gained by setting up a howl for social recognition?" demanded the editor rhetorically. "No one wishes to pick his boon companions at the wailing wall, and no one will tap into a desired fraternity the too-facile vocalizer of his sorrows and his self-pity." Not only was the protest ill-advised, in the opinion of the *American Hebrew*, it was also factually incorrect. "A very limited number of Jews" had been ad-

THE fraternity system, alternately praised and condemned by American educators, has been a source of conflict and difficulty in our colleges and universities for almost three quarters of a century. Constantly under criticism as undemocratic, discriminatory, and subversive of the true process of education in a free society, the system has survived only because it has served a purpose important enough to its adherents to make them willing to fight for it. CAREY McWILLIAMS here offers an analysis of the system in terms of the real function which he sees concealed beneath its avowed "merely social" aims, and the rationalizations that have been used to justify it. Mr. McWilliams, a distinguished student of social problems and of social and ethnic stratification in American society, is the author of a number of books, including *Factories in the Field* (1939), *Ill Fares the Land* (1942), *Brothers Under the Skin* (1943), *Southern California Country* (1946), and, most recently, *A Mask for Privilege*, a study of anti-Semitism. Mr. McWilliams wrote the article "Does Social Discrimination Really Matter?" published in the November 1947 COMMENTARY. He was born in Colorado in 1905 and attended the University of Southern California.

mitted to these societies and the reason for their selection was clear: "they were socially desirable Yale men."

It must be said that many people, before and since, have not been so sanguine about the American fraternity system; and not only Jews. From its earliest days, it has been challenged as undemocratic, discriminatory, and a perversion of the educational aims that institutions of learning presumably exist to serve.

THE college fraternity system is a unique American growth. The first American social fraternities, in the modern sense, were Kappa Alpha, Sigma Phi, and Delta Phi, all formed at Union College in New York State—the mother of the fraternity system—between 1825 and 1827. In the first years of their existence the fraternities had to pursue a clandestine existence, for they ran counter to the widespread Jeffersonian aversion to "secret societies" of any kind. Denouncing the fraternity system as "this great evil," the Michigan faculty in the late 1840's reflected the general attitude by demanding oaths from incoming freshmen that they would not join secret societies.

The turning point in the fight for official recognition came in the 1880's, when President Emerson E. White of Purdue University, who had prohibited fraternities, was forced to resign after the Indiana Supreme Court ruled such prohibitions invalid as discrimination against "a class of citizens." The date is significant. It was toward the close of the 80's, as Veblen pointed out, that American colleges "definitively became leisure-class establishments, either in actual achievement or in aspiration." By 1885, the fraternity system was publicly on its feet and flexing its muscles.

At that time, not more than twenty-five "old-line" social fraternities exercised an unchallenged social pre-eminence in those institutions where the system had taken root. After 1900, however, the number of colleges and the size of their student bodies increased enormously, and the equilibrium achieved in 1885 was seriously threatened. Dozens of "upstart" fraternities were formed, only to be denied recognition by the old-line organizations. A great deal of inter-fraternity rivalry was thus engendered. And despite the increase in the number of Greek-letter societies, fraternity membership lagged behind the increase in student population, thereby exacerbating friction between "barbs" and Greek-letter men.

In 1905 a strong movement arose to outlaw the fraternity system in the high schools, where they had multiplied rapidly, functioning in every respect like their collegiate counterparts. Most local school systems enforced regulations expelling students for forming secret societies, with the result that there is scarcely a single school system in the nation where secret fraternities have not been outlawed.

Criticism of the high-school fraternities, outlined in a report of the National Education Association in 1905, can be summed up as follows: the fraternities stimulated selfishness and snobbery, they interfered with school discipline, they made for undemocratic standards at variance with the values emphasized in the curriculum. All these charges were, of course, equally applicable to the colleges. The distinction was excused, at that time, on the ground that the character of high-school students was "unformed," but could not the same be said of the character of the average college freshman? Actually the real basis for the distinction was that the public schools were much closer to the people than the colleges and were sensitive to the democratic temper in a sense in which the colleges, so many of which were "private" in character, were not.

ONCE fraternities had been barred in the high schools, the college fraternities felt

it necessary to forestall the possibility of an organized attack against themselves.

As their chief defensive act they formed the National Inter-Fraternity Conference in 1909. The "father" of the conference was Dr. William H. P. Faunce of Brown University. Always a staunch defender of the fraternity system, Dr. Faunce related its spread to the growth of the college population. It was impossible, he said, for a freshman to learn to love two thousand men at once; it was like "trying to be affectionate with the Atlantic Ocean." (But when Jewish students petitioned in the late 20's for permission to form a Jewish fraternity at Brown, Dr. Faunce strenuously opposed the application on the ground that such a fraternity would "kindle the fires of racial antagonism.")

The National Inter-Fraternity Conference took steps to cut the ground away from its critics. At the first meeting of the conference, the old-line houses were compelled, for the good of the system, to accept the "upstart" post-1900 fraternities and to accord them full and equal status, thus putting an end to much inter-fraternity rivalry and, at the same time, consolidating the existing groups into a compact and broadened system. Local campus inter-fraternity councils were established which also served to improve fraternity-faculty relationships.

However, the conference has consistently defended the "racial" exclusionist policies of its affiliates, despite the fact that a few old-line Jewish fraternities have been admitted to membership over the years. And at the campus level, many inter-fraternity councils have excluded Jewish and Negro fraternities. For example, the council at the University of Chicago refused in 1937 to accord recognition to Kappa Alpha Psi, a Negro fraternity. (It is an ironical fact that, in this situation as in others, American democracy has taken for granted extremes of social discrimination unknown in other countries.)

DESPITE the "reforms" of the National Inter-Fraternity Conference, a number of states continued their opposition to col-

lege Greek-letter societies. South Carolina barred fraternities by legislation from its state university in 1897, and the bar was not removed until 1929. Mississippi took similar action in 1912, with the prohibition remaining in force until 1926. Between 1912 and 1916 unsuccessful attempts to outlaw the fraternity system were organized in Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, Texas, and other states. Arkansas adopted an act which prohibited fraternity men from holding faculty positions and denied student honors to fraternity members. When the attorney general ruled the legislation unconstitutional, no attempt was made to enforce it, although the statute was never repealed.

Most of the criticism, it can be seen, came from the South, the Middle West, and the Far West. The basis for this sectional variation is clear; in the smaller Eastern colleges a much higher percentage of the student body was absorbed into an established fraternity system. In colleges like Bowdoin, for example, it is still not uncommon to find eighty-five per cent of the students enrolled in fraternities. In the larger and more amorphous student bodies of the non-Eastern colleges, the fraternities were often—until the 1920's—regarded as offspring of Eastern snobbishness and exclusiveness. But in the period after the First World War, the fraternities, by a combination of stubbornness and flexibility, "sold" themselves to the American public as indigenous institutions.

The exclusionist policies of the fraternities were completely ignored in the barrage of criticism directed at them between 1900 and 1920. The general tendency of the social criticism characteristic of this period was a revolt, not so much against privilege as against the monopolization of privilege, and in this atmosphere, criticism of the fraternity system took on an oblique character that preferred not to get down to bed-rock. Those who were barred from the economic benefits of discrimination resented this fact and fought against it. They wanted to be cut in on a good thing.

Another reason why the exclusionist policies of the fraternities were ignored between

1900 and 1920 was that the groups excluded were busily imitating the social mode set by the fraternity system. A glance at the *National Jewish Blue Book: An Elite Directory*, issued in 1927, shows that Jewish students in American colleges had, by 1920, erected a fraternity system of their own that ran parallel, at all points, to the non-Jewish organizations. The Jewish organizations had the same pyramidal structure, and the oldest and most prominent Jewish fraternity at one time followed an unstated policy of initiating only students of German-Jewish ancestry. Similarly, Negroes have erected a completely parallel structure that now includes some twenty-five thousand members, students and alumni. And there are also a few exclusively Catholic societies: Theta Phi Alpha, a sorority with seventeen chapters; and Phi Kappa, a fraternity. In the general system, certain organizations have always stressed a specific Christian faith; thus Alpha Chi Rho has strong Anglican leanings. On the other hand, Phi Omega Pi, admits only those whose fathers, brothers, grandfathers, husbands, or uncles of blood relationship "are Masons in good standing."

THE sororities, never as influential as the fraternities, came into being somewhat later and arose, for the most part, in the small mid-Western "female" colleges. The sororities were organized into a general system in 1902 when the National Pan-Hellenic Congress was formed. In effect, the sororities occupy the same satellite relationship to the fraternities that the women's auxiliaries do in fraternal orders. Anyone who has attended an American college or university will be able to testify to this pairing of certain fraternities with certain sororities, usually on the basis of "similarity of personal background"—which more often than not means an identity of social class.

Despite its ups and downs, the fraternity system is still the most widespread and influential extra-curricular influence in our entire educational system. In 1943, sixty-five national fraternities had approximately 2,441 chapters, owned 1,815 chapter houses

valued at eighty million dollars, and boasted a membership, student and alumni, of more than a million. In addition, there were some three hundred "local" unaffiliated groups with an unrecorded membership. *Newsweek* has estimated that 130 fraternities and sororities with nine thousand chapter organizations have a combined membership of one and a half million. However turbulent its early history, the fraternity system has now fully matured; today few higher educational institutions have withheld open recognition.

OVER the years, the Greek-letter societies have changed little in organization, structure, or function. They are monotonously alike. All have adopted much the same ceremony and ritual, and the same symbols: a badge, a coat-of-arms, a flag, certain colors, a flower, a motto, a grip, a password—the indispensable paraphernalia of secret membership organizations aiming at "exclusiveness."

Like the fraternal orders (Elks, Shriners, etc.), Greek-letter societies aim to produce superior "types," and it is to this end that they feel it necessary to exclude certain racial and ethnic strains. Experienced faculty members have always insisted that they can easily forecast which "houses" the eligible freshmen will be pledged to. In campus parlance, Jane is "a Kappa type" and Bill is "a Beta type." (Similarly, as Dr. Noel P. Gist points out, the Elks appear to attract a type of membership rather different from that of the Masons.)

Both critics and apologists for the Greek-letter societies are in general agreement upon the criteria which determine eligibility for inclusion in the fraternity elite. Dr. Max McConn of Lehigh University has defined these criteria, in climactic order, as follows: money, family connections, the type of preparatory school attended, "personality." And, apart from the question of *which* fraternity a freshman is likely to join, it is apparent that there is a *general* "fraternity type." One shrewd observer has written: "If they have one common quality it is that they do not have to be explained: they are so instan-

taneously attractive as to make the reason for their selection immediately evident."

Now the qualities that make a person "instantaneously attractive" are determined by the prevailing mores, crystallized around the lines of power. "Personality," in this sense, is a highly conventionalized concept. The fraternity, like the fraternal order, operates to minimize change and conflict, particularly along social, economic, and political lines. So far as the *general* fraternity type is concerned, therefore, the prime characteristic is obviously conformity. What the fraternity system does, in effect, is to sift out, in the freshman year, the conformists from the non-conformists. The fraternities aim to recruit those students "most likely to succeed."

There are, of course, variations among conformists, just as there are various roads to "success." On the average American campus, the student body will be divided into two general groups: "Greeks" and "barbs"—conformists and non-conformists. Within the Greek category, however, two divisions can be noted. There is, first of all, the general pyramidal order of fraternities in terms of socio-economic position or degree of exclusiveness. In the college I attended, most students "rated" fraternities according to a neatly graduated scale, which was, in turn, reflected in the style of living and scale of expenditure of the various houses. One could also observe that each "house" tended to emphasize a particular quality and to select a particular type. Thus one house will be "political" (campus politics, of course), another will stress athletic ability, while a third will emphasize social life and the bottle, etc. But in each instance, the typing underscores a conventional means of attaining social acceptability via acceptance into a caste.

ONCE the conformists have been selected from the non-conformists, the fraternity system functions as a mold to fix these "types." First, the sheep are kept apart from the goats and thus tend to become more sheep-like; second, the sheep are trained and

disciplined to produce what Veblen calls "a facility in subservience." The first aspect is so obvious as to require little comment. The sorority, as Edith Rickert critically remarks, aims at the elimination of those "incongruous and hostile elements" in the life of a girl which are often "conducive to growth." The girl is "cultivated instead of being allowed to grow"; she is crippled by the fact that "she is not allowed to come to grips with all sorts and conditions of people. By forcing her to associate with other conformists, the sorority buttresses her conventionality. To make this initial screening process as airtight as possible, the Greek-letter societies confer an absolute power on each individual member to exclude "undesirable" types by "blackballing," a practice universally followed.

The second aspect of the typing process is more complex but no less clearly defined. First of all, the "pledge" or neophyte undergoes a period of probation during which he is closely observed, disciplined, whipped into line, and freely criticized. His intimate friends, the girls he meets, and, to a degree, the clothes he wears and the mannerisms he affects, are all determined for him. Through an intricate system of rushing, pledging, and initiation, he is disciplined, counseled, criticized, and shaped to type. Since the Greek-letter societies are made up of students from the four classes of the college, the influence of the upper-classmen and of the alumni is brought to bear directly upon the lower-classmen, with the newly pledged freshman feeling the fullest weight of this influence in a most impressionable period of his life. At a time when he should be eager for new ideas and experiences, to deepen his knowledge of himself and the world about him—is not that the ultimate end of education?—the fraternity initiate has his personality flattened and standardized.

The fraternity alumni have come to exercise an increasingly dominant role in the affairs of the local chapters. In many cities, the alumni have formed large and often extremely influential clubs or associations, with either their own city club or a regularly

reserved meeting place in the local university club. Today most chapter houses are owned by corporations, the shares of which are in turn owned by rich alumni. The alumni also provide committees to manage the properties, to supervise the affairs of the locals, and to regulate, to some extent, the conduct of the members of the local. This tendency is looked upon with great favor by many clever college administrators, since it ties the wealthier element among the alumni to the college with an intimacy of interest that is often lacking in the general alumni. But it is obvious that this form of remote control of college life by older men whose only qualification is financial cannot be happily regarded by the conscientious educator.

GIVEN the dynamic quality of American life, on and off the campus, it is extremely doubtful that conformists could be effectively organized as conformists unless membership in a fraternal order or a Greek-letter society carried a premium value. Membership in the large national Greek-letter fraternities has always been recognized as a valuable practical asset. A certificate of social acceptability, it is also an aid to employment. Many of the large fraternities have revolving funds for scholarships, loans, and other direct aids (much as the fraternal orders offer insurance at low rates and other "benefits" of one kind or another). "The fraternity," writes Edith Rickert, "is frankly a social privilege which may become an invaluable business asset in after life."

In appraising the value of this privilege, it must be kept in mind that there are also some thirty large professional fraternities with one thousand chapters and about two hundred fifty thousand members. The professional fraternities have gained great strength in some professions, notably in law, medicine, and dentistry. These fraternities rigorously exclude Jews and Negroes, and have, in almost every profession, their Jewish and Negro counterparts. Of the members of my class in law school who belonged to my legal fraternity, at least fifty per cent

were placed in various law offices after graduation through their fraternity connection. These legal fraternities also play an important role in advancing various "brothers" to the bench.

On the undergraduate level, the control exercised over the economic and social "plums" of our society can be enormous. A statistical breakdown of the opportunities in the industrial, financial, medical and legal, advertising, and journalistic fields afforded to the highly selected individuals "tapped" over the years by the three top secret Yale honorary societies, Skull and Bones, Scroll and Keys, and Wolf's Head, would tell an amazing story. Add now the fact that only one Jew has been admitted to these societies in a history of decades, although in the past twenty years Yale's enrollment of Jews has been around fifteen per cent—many obviously of high capacity and talent. The picture among the honorary societies in other major colleges is not markedly different. The relation of fraternity exclusiveness to economic privilege needs little further spelling out. That this relationship is an open secret to every undergraduate is obvious; and it is just as obvious that the system plays a crucial role in reinforcing the connection between social and business success and discrimination which runs like an ugly pattern through American life. In a thousand subtle and not-so-subtle ways the fraternity house is a training school in undemocratic doctrine and practice.

NOR should it be overlooked that the fraternity privilege tends to be hereditary. In my own acquaintance, I know of many cases in which three generations of the same family have belonged to the same social fraternity. And though the line of family succession may be often broken, the social class succession is firm and far-reaching. Graduation from certain preparatory schools will insure a pledge from certain fraternities, and membership in these fraternities will subsequently insure a pledge from certain professional fraternities.

In this respect, the fraternities have long

utilized an elaborate "farm" system in recruiting members. When I was in law school, the legal fraternities largely limited their recruiting to the members of certain social fraternities. The official guide published by Harvard University in 1912 justified the existence of clubs on the ground that "they organize on lines of congeniality and common interest which determine social groupings in the great world," and then went on to say, a few pages later, that the members of Porcellian were recruited "from wealthy students of social prominence." A study of the membership of A. D. and Porcellian for the years 1905-1910 revealed that the members of these clubs had been recruited exclusively from a handful of Eastern preparatory schools; not a single member had come from a preparatory school in the South, the Middle West, or the Far West.

Owen Johnson, the author of *Stover of Yale*—a fine study of collegiate snobbery—wrote in *Collier's* in 1912 that the social usurpation of American colleges mirrored "the country-wide change from the struggle for industrial advancement to the consequent struggle for social betterment." Where the father had gone to college in the 80's to acquire the tools by which he hoped to create a fortune (and often did), the son went to college to win the social acceptance which had come to be regarded as the latter-day equivalent of ability, and which mirrored the transformation from aggressive capitalism to "managerialism." The sons of the moneyed aristocracy that came into being in the latter part of the last century, as Johnson noted, did not seek careers in the army, the church, and the government service; the tradition that sanctioned these careers for the wealthy in Great Britain was lacking in America. Instead, our rich and well-born went to college to be "tapped" for social position and business privilege. Often youngsters were carefully coached by their parents so that they might win a pledge from the "right house."

These parents knew what they were about. Although the struggle for place and

position among the socially acceptable is intense, it takes place under circumstances which offer safeguards against complete failure so long as the game is played according to the rules. In the years between 1850 and 1920, which witnessed the rise and triumph of business enterprise in American life, an emerging upper class felt that it was necessary to impose certain "voluntary" social controls on the middle and lower-middle classes. And no aspect of this problem of control was more important than that presented by the colleges and universities, which traditionally had fixed the patterns of behavior for the upper strata of society. The fraternity system became a form of "leadership screening." If you could pass, on whatever count, you were admitted to membership in the society of the socially elite. While not necessarily a guarantee of success, this privilege certainly offered a running start.

OVER the years an elaborate and constantly changing set of rationalizations has been used to justify the fraternity system. Joining a "congenial group," it is said, makes it possible for the student attending a large university far from home to make a better adjustment to college life. But congenial friendships do not necessarily arise out of the compulsive intimacy of the fraternity system, which is perhaps the most undiscriminating method of making intimate friends ever devised. It is also said that the fraternity provides a means for "completing individual development"—but its whole drive is toward conformity and conventionality. Another justification is that the system makes for "loyalty," which is doubtless true; but the question remains—loyalty to what? As Dr. Gist has argued, secret societies invariably emphasize the conventional moral and ethical values of the larger social system and are, almost by definition, bulwarks of the status quo.

The most common rationalization is that "snobbishness is not made by fraternal organizations," and, therefore, their abolition would not eliminate snobbishness. To the

same effect, educators have said that "the gregarious instinct" and "the play instinct" are "ineradicable human instincts"; hence this "human clubbing-up instinct" is a constant in human behavior. But, one would think, snobbishness is clearly the product of a kind of social conditioning that it should be one of the main functions of a democratic educational system to correct.

It has also been said that "if bowlegged men want to form a group, they have a right to form such a group and let the straight-legged men and the knock-kneed men form their own groups." (This statement was advanced by the National Inter-Fraternity Conference, at its meeting in New York, December 19, 1947, in defense of the social discrimination of its affiliates.) This assumes that the fraternities exist without relation to the structure of social and economic power within the society, an assumption that cannot be validated. (Mr. David A. Embury, Chairman of the National Inter-Fraternity Conference also stated at the same meeting that people should "stop shivering at the word 'discrimination.' I love the discriminating tongue," he said, "the discriminating eye, and the discriminating ear, and above all, the discriminating mind and soul. The person for whom I can find no love and no respect is the indiscriminate person. To be indiscriminate is to be common, to be vulgar.")

There are scores of similar rationalizations, and I have come to the conclusion that there are only three that warrant serious consideration. There was a time in the history of the higher learning in America when fraternities served a useful if limited economic function. In the small college of forty years ago—and most colleges were then small—it was often impractical to maintain a system of dormitories. A small group of congenial students could then band together, rent a house, and hire a cook. But once the large-scale dormitory came into being, the average fraternity house, which at best provides accommodations for twenty or thirty boys, became a luxurious and costly anachronism. Rising costs for repairs,

upkeep, taxes, services, and other charges have, in fact, already begun to limit fraternity membership.

It is also true, as many defenders of the fraternities have pointed out, that the rapid increase of the college population after 1900 created a situation in which some extra-curricular form of discipline was valuable. But American educators had united in condemning the fraternity system in the high schools precisely because it intensified the problem of discipline. What college administrators really have in mind when they advance this rationalization is that the fraternity system has been a reliable anchor to windward against tendencies toward independent thinking and liberalism in the student body. In surrendering to the fraternities, as Owen Johnson put it, the college administrators made it possible for forces outside the campus to impose their standards of success on the body of American students and thus robbed American college education of much of its democratic promise. Visiting European professors have often expressed great surprise at the general conservatism of American students.

The final rationalization is somewhat more subtle. Before 1890 attendance at American high schools and colleges was confined to about five per cent or less of the youth of the country; but after 1900 the number attending collegiate institutions increased three to fourfold. More and more students came to college who were not interested in learning, either in terms of a liberal education or as professional training, but looked upon college education as a useful investment in social polish and a way of acquiring "connections," along with a smattering of information. Faced with this new influx, many college administrators felt compelled to acquiesce in the growth of highly organized extra-curricular activities, among them fraternities. Somehow these sojourners-in-college, as distinguished from the students, had to be kept occupied.

But a moment's reflection reveals that extra-curricular activities do not depend upon the existence of fraternities. Open

membership, non-secret organizations have proved quite as effective in the high schools, and college administrators, one can presume, might have preferred the same solution as the high school officials. But high schools are not dependent upon grants, endowments, and subsidies. College students are still largely recruited from the middle class, a class which has always regarded the colleges and universities as falling peculiarly within its orbit of influence; and the development of social control within the middle class imposed the fraternity system on the colleges.

TODAY a new wind is blowing on American campuses. This time the revolt is directed at the most tell-tale aspect of the fraternity system: its systematic exclusion of certain ethnic groups. It is here that the control function of fraternities is most nakedly revealed. As we have pointed out, the purpose of such exclusionist practices, like social discrimination in the adult world, is to "corner" the advantages—and economic dividends—for those already enjoying them; the delights of power vary inversely with the number who share it. And ethnic groups, conveniently identifiable as "different," offer an easy basis for holding down the number of the privileged (cf. my article "Does Social Discrimination Really Matter?" in the November 1947 COMMENTARY). On the other hand, those with a militant commitment to democracy find in exclusionist practices a natural, glaring target.

Only this fall students at the University of California at Santa Barbara (formerly Santa Barbara State College) offered an amendment to the constitution of the Associated Students which, if adopted, would have denied campus recognition and privileges to any organization that restricted membership on the basis of race, religion, or color. While the amendment was defeated by a narrow margin, the students have not abandoned the fight to secure its adoption. Last December, representatives of the Greek-letter organizations at the University of Minnesota agreed that restrictions on membership should be abolished; and not

one student at this conference spoke out against the motion. On a recent visit to the University of Wyoming, I found that a group of students have organized a local fraternity which admits Jews and Negroes to membership. The University of Washington in Seattle has adopted a code barring new social or fraternal groups that restrict their membership on a racial or religious basis. At the last meeting of the National Inter-Fraternity Conference, delegates from the Western Inter-Fraternity Conference submitted a resolution asking that discriminatory clauses be eliminated. And other examples of student action against discrimination could be cited.

College administrators in institutions that for years have been fraternity strongholds have begun to change their attitude. In the spring of 1946, the authorities at Amherst told the thirteen fraternities on the campus that they would not be permitted to open in the fall unless they agreed to drop racial and religious discriminations and to scale down the sums paid by the Amherst locals to their national bodies. One fraternity, Delta Tau Delta, instructed its Amherst local to reject the ruling or forfeit its charter; the local promptly disaffiliated from the national. At Arizona State Teachers College, Dean Grimes has announced that he intends, if possible, to deny recognition to any organization that restricts membership on the basis of race, religion, or color.

But the fraternity system will not be easily abolished nor will discriminatory clauses vanish without a struggle. The

struggle may be expected to reach major proportions when it is carried to the powerfully entrenched professional fraternities.

THAT the fraternity system can be abolished in state universities—and by fraternity system, let me repeat, I mean secret, selective membership associations—was clearly established in the case of *Waugh v. University of Mississippi*, which the United States Supreme Court decided in 1915. While it is doubtful if legislation of this kind can be applied to so-called “private” institutions, it should be pointed out that in at least twelve states the properties of college fraternities have been granted tax-exemption by statute. State legislatures can clearly attach conditions to such grants or can revoke them. However, it is not so much the abolition, but rather the gradual transformation of the fraternity system that is to be expected in the near future. Although the National Inter-Fraternity Conference continues to defend exclusionist policies, it may once again momentarily save the system by yielding on this point.

But no minor reforms can eliminate the basic problem: The fraternity system exists as a calculated interference with the democratic potential of American education, a device by which forces external to the campus seek to organize students for ready classification and “placing” in the general scheme of things. In the long run, the fraternity system seems likely to disappear—and no one concerned with the fulfillment of the democratic promise is likely to regret its passing.